

Requirements for the Meat/Meat Alternates Component of the Summer Food Service Program Meal Patterns

This document provides guidance on meeting the meal pattern and crediting requirements for the meat/meat alternates component of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) [Summer Food Service Program \(SFSP\) meal patterns](#). For more information on the SFSP meal patterns and the meat/meat alternates component, visit the “[SFSP Meal Patterns](#)” and “[Meat/Meat Alternates Component for the SFSP](#)” sections of the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) SFSP webpage.

Meal Pattern Requirements

The SFSP meal patterns require 2 ounces of the meat/meat alternates component at lunch and supper. A 1-ounce serving of the meat/meat alternates component may be one of the two required snack components.

The meat/meat alternates component is optional at breakfast. SFSP sponsors may serve a meat/meat alternate in addition to the three required breakfast components.

Requirement for visible components

The USDA requires that foods must be visible (recognizable) to credit toward the SFSP meal patterns. For example, SFSP sponsors cannot credit peanut butter in smoothies or pureed tofu in soups. The intent for this requirement is to ensure that children can easily identify the foods in SFSP menus. The nutrition education aspect of the Child Nutrition Programs includes the goal of helping children recognize the food groups that contribute to healthy meals and snacks.

The USDA allows an exception to this requirement for yogurt blended in fruit or vegetable smoothies, pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies, and pasta made with 100 percent vegetable flours. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Crediting Smoothies in the SFSP](#) and [Requirements for the Vegetables/Fruits Component of the SFSP Meal Patterns](#), and “[Crediting pasta made of 100 percent legume flours](#)” in this document.



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Serving Size

The amount of the meat/meat alternates component refers to the edible portion of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish, e.g., cooked lean meat without bone, breading, binders, extenders, or other ingredients. A 1-ounce serving of the meat/meat alternates component equals:

- 1 ounce of lean meat, poultry, or fish without added liquid, binders, and extenders (refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Deli Meats in the SFSP](#));
- 1 ounce of cheese (low-fat recommended);
- 2 ounces of cottage or ricotta cheese, cheese food/spread, or cheese substitute (low-fat recommended);
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of cooked beans and peas (legumes), e.g., kidney beans, chick peas (garbanzo beans), lentils, and split peas (refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Legumes in the SFSP](#));
- $\frac{1}{2}$ large egg;
- 2 tablespoons of nut or seed butters, e.g., peanut butter, almond butter, cashew butter, and sunflower seed butter (refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the SFSP](#));
- 1 ounce of nuts or seeds, e.g., almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios, soy nuts, and walnuts (refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the SFSP](#));
- 1 ounce of tempeh that contains only soybeans (or other legumes), water, tempeh culture, and for some varieties, vinegar, seasonings, and herbs ingredients (tempeh products with other ingredients require a CN label or PFS);
- 3 ounces of surimi (alternate crediting amounts must be documented with a PFS);
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of yogurt or soy yogurt (refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Yogurt in the SFSP](#)): and
- 1 ounce of alternate protein product (APP) that meets the USDA's APP requirements (refer to the CSDE's resource, [Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the SFSP](#)).

The minimum creditable amount of the meat/meat alternates component is $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce. If a menu item provides less than the full meal pattern serving, the SFSP menu must include the additional amount from other meat/meat alternates.

The serving must contain the appropriate edible portion of meat/meat alternates, excluding any other ingredients. For example, to credit tuna salad as 2 ounces of the meat/meat alternates component, the serving must contain 2 ounces of tuna fish, before added ingredients such as mayonnaise, celery, and seasonings.

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Required Crediting Documentation

Meat or meat alternates that are part of other foods or that contain added ingredients require appropriate documentation to credit as the meat/meat alternates component in the SFSP. For example, to credit a commercial cheese pizza or a cheese pizza recipe as 2 ounces of the meat/meat alternates component, the SFSP sponsor must have documentation indicating that the serving contains 2 ounces of cheese.

The guidance below summarizes the required documentation for commercial processed products and foods made from scratch. Documentation must be based on the food yields and crediting information for meat/meat alternates in the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FBG).

Commercial processed products

SFSP sponsors must maintain crediting documentation for processed commercial products that contain meat/meat alternates, such as chicken nuggets, pizza, deli meats, and hotdogs. Acceptable documentation includes a Child Nutrition (CN) label (available only for main dish entrees that contribute to the meat/meat alternates component) or manufacturer's product formulation statement (PFS). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labeling Program](#), [Product Formulation Statements](#) and [Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the SFSP](#); and the USDA's [PFS forms for the SFSP](#) and [Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement](#). For additional guidance, visit the "[Crediting Commercial Processed Products](#)" section of the CSDE's SFSP webpage.

Commercial processed products without a CN label or PFS cannot credit in the SFSP meal patterns.

Foods made from scratch

For foods prepared from scratch, SFSP sponsors must have a recipe that documents the amount of meat or meat alternate per serving. The USDA encourages SFSP sponsors to use standardized recipes whenever possible. For more information, refer to the CSDE's [Standardized Recipe Form for the SFSP](#) and visit the "[Standardized Recipes](#)" section of the CSDE's SFSP webpage.

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Crediting Requirements

Meat/meat alternate products and recipes must meet specific criteria to credit as the meat/meat alternates component in the SFSP meal patterns. The guidance below addresses the crediting requirements for meat/meat alternates.

Crediting alternate protein products (APPs)

APPs are generally single ingredient powders (such as soy flours, soy concentrates, soy isolates, whey protein concentrate, whey protein isolates, and casein) that are added to foods. Examples of foods that might contain added APPs include beef patties, beef crumbles, pizza topping, meat loaf, meat sauce, taco filling, burritos, and tuna salad.

APPs must meet the requirements in [appendix A](#) of the SFSP regulations (7 CFR 225). SFSP sponsors must obtain documentation from the manufacturer that the product meets the USDA's three APP criteria. Acceptable documentation includes a CN label, PFS, or signed letter from a company official attesting that the APP meets the USDA's requirements. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the SFSP](#), and the USDA's [Questions and Answers on Alternate Protein Products](#).

Crediting foods with added binders, extenders, and liquids

SFSP sponsors must obtain appropriate crediting documentation for commercial meat and meat alternate products with added binders, extenders, and liquids (such as modified food starch, carrageenan, soy flour, water, and broth). These product credit based on the percentage of meat in the product formula (indicated in the CN label or PFS), not the weight of the serving. For more information, refer to "[Required Crediting Documentation](#)" and "[Crediting deli meats](#)" in this document.

Crediting cheeses

The USDA recommends serving low-fat or reduced-fat cheeses. A 1-ounce serving of natural cheese (e.g., Colby, Monterey Jack, and Swiss) or process cheese (e.g., American) credits as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. A 2-ounce (¼ cup) serving of cottage or ricotta cheese, cheese food or cheese spread, and cheese substitutes credits as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. Cheese substitute, cheese food substitute, and cheese spread substitute must meet the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) standard of identity for substitute foods and must be labeled as "cheese substitute," "cheese food substitute," or "cheese spread substitute." Imitation cheese and cheese products do not credit in SFSP meals and snacks.

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Crediting deli meats

SFSP sponsors must obtain appropriate crediting documentation for deli meats (refer to “[Required Crediting Documentation](#)” in this document). Many deli meats do not credit based on serving weight because they contain added binders, extenders, and liquids. For example, one brand of deli meat might require 1.6 ounces to credit as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component, while another brand might require 2.3 ounces to credit as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Deli Meats in the SFSP](#).

The USDA recommends limiting processed meats and poultry (such as hot dogs, bologna, luncheon meat, pepperoni, and sausages) to no more than once per week.

Crediting dried meat, poultry, and seafood products

Jerky, dried meat sticks, and similar products require a CN label or PFS to document the meat/meat alternates contribution. SFSP sponsors must evaluate the product’s PFS to ensure it complies with the USDA’s three crediting principles for dried products: 1) The creditable meat ingredient listed on the product’s PFS must match or have a similar description as the ingredient listed in the product’s ingredients statement; 2) the creditable meat ingredient listed on the product’s PFS must have a similar description to a food item in the FBG; and 3) the creditable amount cannot exceed the finished weight of the product (i.e., the cooked weight ready for serving).

Fat content must be 30 percent or less for ground beef or ground pork to credit in Child Nutrition Programs. Dried meat, poultry, and seafood products that do not indicate the fat percentage do not credit.

The requirements for crediting dried meat are summarized in [USDA Memo SP 21-2019, CACFP 08-2019 and SFSP 07-2019: Crediting Shelf-Stable, Dried and Semi-Dried Meat, Poultry, and Seafood Products in the Child Nutrition Programs](#). For additional guidance on crediting dried meat products, watch the USDA’s webinar, [Moving Forward: Update on Food Crediting in Child Nutrition Programs with Guidance for Dried Meat Products](#).

Crediting eggs

Only whole eggs are creditable. Half of a large egg credits as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. Liquid egg substitutes are not whole eggs and are not creditable. Egg whites do not credit if served without the yolks.

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Crediting legumes

Legumes (cooked dry beans and peas) may credit as either the meat/meat alternates component or the vegetables component, but one serving cannot credit as both components in the same meal or snack. Menu planners must decide in advance how to credit legumes in SFSP menus.

Legumes credit based on volume. A $\frac{1}{4}$ -cup serving of legumes credits as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. The serving refers to the amount of cooked legumes excluding other ingredients, such as the sauce and pork fat in baked beans. For example, if the menu planner credits $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of baked beans as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component, the serving must contain $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of beans, not including the sauce and pork fat.

Roasted or dried legumes (such as roasted soybeans or roasted chickpeas) credit as the meat/meat alternates component the same as nuts and seeds. A 1-ounce serving of roasted or dried legumes credits as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component.

For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Legumes in the SFSP](#).

Crediting nuts and seeds

Creditable nuts and seeds include almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, walnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, and soy nuts. Acorns, chestnuts, and coconut do not credit.

A 1-ounce serving of nuts and seeds credits as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. At lunch and supper, nuts and seeds cannot credit for more than half of the meat/meat alternates component; they must be combined with another meat/meat alternate to provide the required 2-ounce serving. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the SFSP](#).

Children younger than 4 are at the highest risk of choking. Consider children's ages and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer nuts or seeds in snack menus. The USDA recommends that any nuts or seeds served to young children are in a prepared food and are ground or finely chopped.

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Crediting nut and seed butters

Creditable nut and seed butters include almond butter, cashew nut butter, peanut butter, sesame seed butter, soy nut butter, and sunflower seed butter. Reduced-fat peanut butter must meet the FDA's standards of identity for peanut butter ([21 CFR 164.150](#)), which requires that products contain at least 90 percent peanuts.

The serving size for nut and seed butters is based on volume (tablespoons), not weight (ounces). Two tablespoons ($\frac{1}{8}$ cup) of nut or seed butter credit as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the SFSP](#).

Crediting pasta made of 100 percent legume flours

Pasta products made of 100 percent legume flours (such as chickpea flour or lentil flour) may credit as either the meat/meat alternates component or vegetables/fruits component, but one serving cannot credit as both components in the same meal or snack. A $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup serving of 100 percent legume flour pasta credits as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. The requirements for crediting pasta products made of vegetable flours are summarized in [USDA Memo SP 26-2019](#), [CACFP 13-2019](#) and [SFSP 12-2019: Crediting Pasta Products Made of Vegetable Flour in the Child Nutrition Programs](#).

Crediting surimi seafood

Surimi seafood is a pasteurized, ready-to-eat, restructured seafood usually made from pollock (fish). A 3-ounce serving of surimi seafood credits as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. SFSP sponsors must obtain a CN label or manufacturer's PFS to credit surimi seafood differently (refer to "[Required Crediting Documentation](#)" in this document). The requirements for crediting surimi are summarized in [USDA Memo SP 24-2019](#), [CACFP 11-2019](#) and [SFSP 10-2019: Crediting Surimi Seafood in the Child Nutrition Programs](#). For additional guidance on crediting surimi, watch the USDA's webinar, [Additional Meat/Meat Alternate Options for CNPs: Crediting Tempeh and Surimi](#).

Crediting tempeh

Tempeh is a fermented soybean cake traditionally made from whole soybeans. A 1-ounce serving of tempeh credits as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. This method of crediting applies only to tempeh products whose ingredients are limited to soybeans (or other legumes), water, tempeh culture, and for some varieties, vinegar, seasonings, and herbs. If the tempeh product contains other ingredients, SFSP sponsors must obtain a CN label or PFS to determine crediting information (refer to "[Required Crediting Documentation](#)" in this document). The requirements for crediting tempeh are summarized in [USDA Memo SP 25-2019](#), [CACFP 12-2019](#) and [SFSP 11-2019](#):

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Crediting Tempeh in the Child Nutrition Programs. For additional guidance on crediting tempeh, watch the USDA's webinar, [Additional Meat/Meat Alternate Options for CNPs: Crediting Tempeh and Surimi](#).

Crediting yogurt

Yogurt may be plain or flavored; sweetened or unsweetened; any fat content; and may contain added fruit, either blended or on the bottom. The USDA recommends serving low-fat or reduced-fat yogurts. Soy yogurt does not credit in SFSP meals and snacks.

The serving size for yogurt is based on volume (cups) or weight (ounces), and is the same for all types, flavors, and fat contents. A ½-cup serving (volume) or 4 ounces (weight) credits as 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component. To increase nutrient variety, the CSDE recommends not serving yogurt when milk is the only other snack component. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Yogurt in the SFSP](#).

Noncreditable meat/meat alternates

Examples of foods that do not credit include but are not limited to bacon; commercial canned soups (e.g., beef barley, beef noodle, turkey or chicken noodle, and turkey or chicken rice); cream cheese; drinkable yogurt; egg whites; frozen yogurt; imitation cheese; sour cream; soy yogurt, tofu; and soy yogurt. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Noncreditable Foods in the SFSP](#).

Considerations for Reducing Choking Risks for Young Children

Children younger than 4 are at the highest risk of choking. Consider children's age and developmental readiness when deciding what types of meat/meat alternate foods to offer in SFSP menus; and modify foods and menus as appropriate. Examples of meat/meat alternates that may cause choking include nuts and seeds, e.g., peanuts, almonds and sunflower or pumpkin seeds; chunks or spoonfuls of peanut butter or other nut and seed butters; tough meat or large chunks of meat; fish with bones; and large chunks of cheese, especially string cheese.

Preparation techniques to reduce the risk of choking include cutting tube-shaped foods like hot dogs or string cheese into short strips instead of round pieces; removing all bones from fish, chicken, and meat before cooking or serving; grinding up tough meats and poultry; chopping peanuts, nuts, and seeds finely, or grinding before adding to prepared foods; and spreading nut and seed butters thinly on other foods (such as toast and crackers). For additional guidance, visit the "[Choking Prevention](#)" section of the CSDE's [Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

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Resources

Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the SFSP (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/Accepting_Processed_Product_Documentation_SFSP.pdf

Child Nutrition (CN) Labeling Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CN_Labeling_Program.pdf

Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the SFSP (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/Credit_Commercial_MMA_SFSP.pdf

Crediting Deli Meats in the SFSP (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/Credit_Deli_SFSP.pdf

Crediting Foods in the SFSP (“Documents/Forms” section of CSDE’s SFSP webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Summer-Food-Service-Program/Documents>

Crediting Legumes in the SFSP (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/Credit_Legumes_SFSP.pdf

Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the SFSP (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/Credit_Nuts_Seeds_SFSP.pdf

Crediting Smoothies in the SFSP (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/Credit_Smoothies_SFSP.pdf

Crediting Summary Charts for the SFSP Meal Patterns (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/Crediting_Summary_Charts_SFSP.pdf

Crediting Yogurt in the SFSP (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/Credit_Yogurt_SFSP.pdf

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>

Meal Patterns for the SFSP (CSDE’s SFSP webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Summer-Food-Service-Program#MealPatterns>

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Meat/Meat Alternates Component for the SFSP (“Documents/Forms” section of CSDE’s SFSP webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Summer-Food-Service-Program/Documents#MMA>

Noncreditable Foods in the SFSP (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/Noncreditable_Foods_SFSP.pdf

Nutrition Guide: Summer Food Service Program (USDA):

https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/USDA_SFSP_NutritionGuide.pdf

Product Formulation Statement (Product Analysis) for Meat/Meat Alternate (M/MA) Products in Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Meats-Meat_Alternates_Fillable_508.pdf

Product Formulation Statements (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Product_Formulation_Statements.pdf

Questions and Answers on Alternate Protein Products (APP) (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/questions-and-answers-alternate-protein-products-app>

Requirements for the Meat/Meat Alternates Component of the SFSP Meal Patterns (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/Component_MMA_SFSP.pdf

Reviewer’s Checklist for Evaluating Manufacturer Product Formulation Statements for Meat/Meat Alternates (USDA):

https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/reviewer_checklist.pdf

Standardized Recipe Form for the SFSP (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/Standardized_Recipe_Form_SFSP.docx

Standardized Recipes (“Documents/Forms” section of CSDE’s SFSP webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Summer-Food-Service-Program/Documents#StandardizedRecipes>

Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer’s Product Formulation Statement (USDA):

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/manufacturerPFStipsheet.pdf>

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USDA Memo SP 21-2019, CACFP 08-2019 and SFSP 07-2019: Crediting Shelf-Stable, Dried and Semi-Dried Meat, Poultry, and Seafood Products in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/crediting-shelf-stable-dried-and-semi-dried-meat-poultry-and-seafood-products-child-nutrition>

USDA Memo SP 24-2019, CACFP 11-2019 and SFSP 10-2019: Crediting Surimi Seafood in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/crediting-surimi-seafood-child-nutrition-programs>

USDA Memo SP 25-2019, CACFP 12-2019 and SFSP 11-2019: Crediting Tempeh in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/crediting-tempeh-child-nutrition-programs>

USDA Memo SP 26-2019, CACFP 13-2019 and SFSP 12-2019: Crediting Pasta Products Made of Vegetable Flour in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/crediting-pasta-products-made-vegetable-flour-child-nutrition-programs>

USDA Memo SP 40-2019, CACFP 17-2019 and SFSP 17-2019: Smoothies Offered in the Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs>

USDA Webinar: Additional Meat/Meat Alternates Options for CNPs: Crediting Tempeh and Surimi:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/additional-meat-meat-alternate-tempeh-and-surimi>

USDA Webinar: Moving Forward: Update on Food Crediting in Child Nutrition Programs with Guidance for Dried Meat Products:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/moving-forward-update-food-crediting-dried-meat-products>

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For more information, visit the [SFSP Meal Patterns](#) and [Crediting Foods in the SFSP](#) sections of the CSDE's SFSP webpage, or contact the [Summer Meals staff](#) in the CSDE's Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SFSP/CreditingSFSP/Component_MMA_SFSP.pdf.

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- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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